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MEMAKERS' CHAT

TUESDAY, AUGUST 6, 1940

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

SUBJECT: "QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS." Information from the Office of Experiment Stations, U.S.D.A.

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A number of questions about color of food arrived in this week's mail.

The first question is about the color of homemade catsup. The letter asks: "Can you tell me how to make tomato catsup with a bright red color like the catsup for sale in the stores? The catsup I make always is dark."

Scientists at the New York State Experiment Station give several reasons why catsup turns dark. One reason is cooking in an iron kettle. Another is too long cooking. A third is using the wrong spices. Adding the sugar and salt too early in the cooking is still another reason. And, as you might expect, scorching catsup also darkens it.

So the advice from the New York Station for making bright-colored catsup is this: Boil down the catsup as rapidly as possible. Use a wide shallow kettle that allows a broad surface for evaporation. And have the kettle enamelware or aluminum but never iron.

About spices: Paprika and red pepper help keep catsup a nice bright red color, but black pepper, cloves and allspice turn it dark. Good spices to use for a mild, bright-colored catsup are: paprika, red pepper, celery seed, mustard seed, and cinnamon.

While the catsup boils, keep stirring it to prevent scorching. Scorching not only darkens the color but gives an unpleasant flavor.

Last advice about color: Remember to add salt, sugar and vinegar toward the end of the cooking rather than at the beginning. Add these ingredients about 5 minutes before you take the catsup from the stove.

The second letter brings up a problem scientists haven't solved yet. The letter says: "How can I keep sauerkraut in glass jars from turning brown?"

Scientists at the Wisconsin Experiment Station have been working on this problem, but they haven't found the answer yet. They say sealing the jars immediately helps prevent browning. But even in sealed jars kraut occasionally becomes brown. The Wisconsin scientists think now the conditions under which the cabbage grew may have something to do with it. They'd like to find the cause of the trouble for many reasons. One is that kraut loses vitamin C when it turns brown. Ordinarily sauerkraut keeps much of the vitamin C in the cabbage.

Speaking of turning brown, here's a letter about grape juice that changed from its attractive purple-red color to brown. A housewife reports: "Last fall I put up a big batch of grape juice. It gradually turned brown. Brown flecks settled out of the juice to the bottom of the bottles. The taste of the juice changed, too. It took on a taste like overcooked grape butter."

The New York State Experiment Station again gives the answer. Scientists there found that grape juice would turn brown and change in flavor if not properly sealed away from air. If you want grape juice to keep, heat it enough to kill spoilage organisms, and then put it in sterilized bottles and seal it so carefully no air can get in.

Now here's a letter from a lady who treasures her vitamins. She wants to know if it's true that a green and yellow color means that a vegetable is rich in vitamins.

Research in many nutrition laboratories has showed that vitamin A usually "wears" green or yellow. In other words, green or yellow colored vegetables are likely to be good sources of vitamin A. Of course these and other vegetables are often important, too, for vitamin C and many of the valuable minerals.

The last question today concerns vitamins but not color. A busy farm housewife writes: "In summer I usually prepare vegetables in the cool of the evening for



next day. I often shell beans or peas, shred cabbage, or peel and cut up the squash the night before to save labor in the heat of the day. Sometimes I cook the vegetables the night before so I only have to warm them up before meals. My neighbor tells me this is a mistake. She says vegetables lose vitamins when they are prepared or cooked so far in advance. Is this true?"

Your neighbor has the right idea. Lima beans and peas lose vitamin C rapidly as soon as you shell them; cabbage does the same when you cut it up; and green corn as soon as it is out of the husk. If you must prepare vegetables in advance keep them cold in the refrigerator until just before cooking. The cold helps protect the vitamin, but the vegetables still lose some as they stand in the refrigerator. They lose much more when you cook them in advance and warm them up again. The best way to save all possible vitamins in vegetables, as well as the flavor and other fresh qualities, is to bring vegetables in from the garden the last minute, and prepare and cook them just before you serve them. Of course, you know, too, that vegetables are best when cooked until just tender, no longer.

Many a fine vegetable loses much of its food value waiting in the warm air of the kitchen or grocery store. And many a fine vegetable loses its value and freshness by being cooked and warmed over, or kept warm for hours on the steam table of a restaurant. City people often have to take their vegetables minus much of the natural vitamins because they must buy what the market or restaurant offers. But people who have their own gardens can get the maximum in food value and flavor from vegetables if they remember the last-minute rule for gathering and preparation.

That's all the questions for today. More on Thursday.

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